

Message Text

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FOR CARTER FROM PA

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT FRONT-PAGE BY-LINER BY FLORA LEWIS, NEW YORK TIMES, MONDAY, AUGUST 22, HEADED "BEGIN'S UNSWERVING POLICY."
2. JERUSALEM, AUGUST 20--DESPITE NUMEROUS PREDICTIONS THAT HE IS ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH THE UNITED STATES, PRIME MINISTER MENACHEM BEGIN DOES NOT THINK SO. ON THE CONTRARY, HE GIVES EVERY SIGN OF BEING SO DEEPLY CONVINCED OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF HIS VIEW THAT HE CANNOT IMAGINE HOW RIGHT-THINKING PEOPLE, INCLUDING AN AMERICAN PRESIDENT, COULD POSSIBLY INSIST ON THE OPPOSITE.
3. THEREFORE, MR. BEGIN'S STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH THE
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4. NO ONE QUESTIONS THAT HE WOULD TRULY LIKE TO ACHIEVE AN END TO ISRAEL'S 30 YEARS OF SPUTTERING WARS AND WAR-

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DELICATE INTERNATIONAL ATTEMPT TO NEGOTIATE A MIDDLE EAST
P:ACE IS ALMOST CERTAINLY SIMPLER THAN THE PROFESSIONAL
DIPLOMATIC TEA-LEAF READERS SUPPOSE. IT IS, IN EFFECT,
WHAT MEETS THE EYE.

LIKE TRUCES WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. NO ONE QUESTIONS THAT

HE WOULD LIKE TO MAINTAIN WHAT HE CALLS ISRAEL'S "DEEP
AND FUNDAMENTAL FRIENDSHIP, WITH THE UNITED STATES.

5. SOME ISRAELIS, THOUGH THEY ARE A MINORITY, MOST
DIPLOMATS AND ALMOST ALL ARABS DO QUESTION WHETHER HE WILL
BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS ON THE TERMS HE HAS SET,
OR IS WILLING TO COMPROMISE ENOUGH TO BRING THEM WITHIN
REACH. BUT NOT PRIME MINISTER BEGIN. HIS BASIC PREM-
ISE IS THAT THE ARABS HAVE NOT ABANDONED THEIR ROLE OF
SEEKING THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL, AND THAT THEREFORE HE
NOT ONLY MUST HOLD FIRM BUT SHOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO RETAIN
AMERICAN SUPPORT. -

6. HE PROFESSES NOT TO UNDERSTAND WHY WASHINGTON SEEMS
UPSET AT HIS REFUSAL TO HOLD OFF FURTHER JEWISH SETTLE-
MENT OF THE WEST BANK OF THE JORDAN RIVER OR AT HIS
DECISION TO GIVE EQUAL SOCIAL RIGHTS TO ARAB PALESTINIANS
UNDER ISRAELI RULE.

7. IF PEACE DOES COME, HE ARGUES, WHAT IS WRONG WITH
HAVING JEWS LIVING IN PREDOMINANTLY ARAB AREAS JUST AS
SOME ARABS HAVE BEEN LIVING IN ISRAEL SINCE 1948? AND
IN THE MEANTIME, HE ASKS, WHAT IS WRONG WITH IMPROVING THE
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EVERYDAY LIVING CONDITIONS OF ARABS UNDER MILITARY
OCCUPATION. "IS IT BAD TO DO GOOD?"

8. THE DIPLOMATS TELL HIM THAT THIS POSTURE STRAINS THE
CLIMATE FOR NEGOTIATION, SENDING PROVOCATIVE "SIGNALS,
OF INTRANSIGENCE. HE TENDS TO SHRUG OFF THE CHARGE AS
UNFAIR, RETORTING THAT IT IS THE ARABS WHO ARE INTRANSI-
GENTLY PURSUING THEIR DREAM OF LIQUIDATING ISRAEL AND THAT
A REFUSAL TO COMMIT SUICIDE, EVEN IN GRADUAL STAGES,
CANNOT BE CONSIDERED UNREASONABLE JEWISH STUBBORNNESS.

9. WHAT THEN? WHAT IF NEGOTIATIONS FAIL? THEN, IN HIS
VIEW, IT WILL DEMONSTRATE ONCE MORE THAT THE ARABS DO NOT
WANT PEACE AND THAT THE SITUATION WILL HAVE TO GO ON AS
BEFORE. HE TAKES THE QUESTION OF WHETHER HE THINKS TIME
IS WORKING FOR OR AGAINST ISRAEL AS MEANINGLESS, OR ANY-
WAY UNIMPORTANT BESIDE THE CENTRAL QUESTION OF ASSURING
ISRAEL'S PERMANENT, FLOURISHING EXISTENCE.

10. OF COURSE, THE SHREWD AND AT THIS POINT HIGHLY
POPULAR PRIME MINISTER IS NOT SIMPLE-MINDED. HE IS AWARE
OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ARAB OIL TO THE WESTERN WORLD, OF

THE WEIGHT OF NUMBERS BETWEEN ARABS AND ISRAELIS, OF THE DANGER OF ISRAEL'S ISOLATION AND OF THE MEANING OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S IMPLIED THREAT TO GO OVER HIS HEAD WITH

AN APPEAL TO AMERICAN, ISRAELI AND WORLD OPINION IF HE STANDS IN THE WAY OF AN ACCESSIBLE PEACE.

11. BUT BASICALLY, THOUGH HE DOES NOT SAY SO, HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT REAL PEACE IS ATTAINABLE NOW. ALL THE HISTORY OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICTS HAS BEEN STUDDERED WITH ARAB DIVISION, INDECISION AND SELF-INJURY, AND MR. BEGIN MUST BE PRESUMED TO BE RELYING ON THE ARABS TO REPEAT THE PATTERN IN A WAY THAT WILL DEFLECT THE POSSIBILITY OF A UNITED STATES-ISRAELI CONFRONTATION.

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12. THE DIPLOMATIC EXPERTS ARE INCLINED TO GO ALONG WITH THIS ASSESSMENT. THEY DO NOT EVEN THINK THAT THE ISSUE OF AMERICAN CONTACT WITH THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION IS GOING TO MATERIALIZE FULLY, BECAUSE THEY DO NOT THINK THE P.L.O. WILL BRING ITSELF TO MEET THE AMERICAN CONDITION OF EVEN TACIT BUT FORMAL ACCEPTANCE OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO SURVIVE, DESPITE PRESSURE FROM SOME ARAB STATES.

13. MR. BEGIN DOES NOT SHOW CONCERN FOR THE INFINITE INTRICACY OF INTER-ARAB RELATIONS, WHICH SO FASCINATE WESTERN ANALYSTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST BECAUSE OF THE ENDLESSLY SHIFTING BALANCES OF POWER AND INTERESTS. INSTEAD, LIKE THE ARAB LEADERS AND SPOKESMEN IN THEIR MOMENTS OF GRANDEST RHETORIC, HE SPEAKS OF THE "GREAT ARAB NATION" AND SEEMS TO EXPECT IT TO CONTINUE FINDING AGREEMENT ON ONLY ONE QUESTION THAT MATTERS TO HIM-- OPPOSITION TO ISRAEL.

14. PERHAPS THAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WASHINGTON AND JERUSALEM ADMINISTRATIONS AT THIS POINT, UNDERLYING ALL THE OTHER DIFFERENCES ON BOTH THE PROCEDURES AND SUBSTANCE OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. WASHINGTON SEEMS TO THINK THAT THE DETAILED PATTERNS OF ARAB RELATIONSHIPS DO MATTER AND THAT IN A SUBTLY EMERGING BALANCE A POINT CAN BE FOUND WHERE PEACE MAY BE POSSIBLE. MR. BEGIN APPARENTLY DOES NOT.

15. THEREFORE, HE DOES NOT SEEM WORRIED THAT THE DEVELOPING FACTS WILL LEAD HIM TO AN IMPASSE WITH WASHINGTON OVER THE ACKNOWLEDGED DIFFERENCES OF POLICY. HE ACTS AS THOUGH HE WERE SURE THAT PRESIDENT CARTER, UNCLASSIFIED

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FOR ALL HIS GOOD INTENTIONS, WILL BE FORCED TO COME AROUND TO HIS OWN VIEW THAT THE ARABS ARE NOT READY FOR PEACE.

16. IN THE MEANTIME, HE HAS MOVED TO EASE THE SITUATION WHEN IT THREATENS TO BECOME TOO ABRASIVE WITH AN OCCASIONAL REASSURING WORD OF POSSIBLE FLEXIBILITY FROM ONE OF HIS AIDES OR MINISTERS, USUALLY BALANCED WITH HIS OWN WORDS OR EVEN ACTS OF DETERMINATION TO ASSURE HIS ISRAELI FOLLOWERS THAT HE HAS NOT BUCKLED A BIT.

17. HE HAS NOTHING AGAINST AN OCCASIONAL MANEUVER WHEN IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL, SO LONG AS IT DOES NOT UNDERMINE THE CREDIBILITY OF HIS FIRM STANCE.

18. AND IF HE HAS MISCALCULATED WASHINGTON'S REACTION, HE HAS SOUGHT TO PREPARE RESERVES FOR A SHOWDOWN HE HOPES HE CAN AVOID. MR. BEGIN IS AT LEAST AS ACUTELY TUNED AS PRESIDENT CARTER TO THE PRESSURES THAT CAN BE GENERATED BY FOCUSING PUBLIC OPINION, AND IS NO MORE LOATHE TO IGNORE THE NICETIES OF PROTOCOL BY APPEALING TO AMERICAN JEWS AND TO AMERICAN SENTIMENT IN GENERAL OVER THE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT IF NEED BE.

19. THE THREAT OF STIRRING UP OPPOSITION IS DOUBLE-EDGED AND RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, MR. BEGIN SEEMS CONFIDENT THAT HE CAN PARRY AS EFFECTIVELY AS PRESIDENT CARTER WITH THAT WEAPON.

20. THE BETTING AMONG INFORMED WESTERN DIPLOMATS IN ISRAEL IS THAT THINGS WILL NOT DETERIORATE TO SUCH A POINT, HOWEVER, BECAUSE NO ONE--NOT ISRAEL, NOT THE UNITED STATES, NOT THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS--WANTS TO PUSH THE SITUATION THAT HARD AT THIS STAGE.

21. THE RELATIVELY MILD OFFICIAL UNITED STATES REACTION
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SO FAR TO MR. BEGIN'S POSTURE IS BASED ON THE BELIEF IN WASHINGTON THAT THERE REALLY MAY BE A CHANCE FOR SETTLEMENT NOW, AND THAT IT REQUIRES MAINTENANCE OF ISRAEL'S CONFIDENCE AND TRUST IN AMERICAN MOTIVES. DRIVING ISRAEL BACK INTO WHAT ONE ASTUTE SENIOR DIPLOMAT CALLED ITS "PORCUPINE POSITION" WOULD BE LIKELY TO DESTROY WHAT HOPE THERE IS FOR FRUITFUL NEGOTIATIONS, IT IS FELT.

22. SO ANOTHER SENIOR WESTERN OFFICIAL, WITH EXPERIENCE AMONG THE ARABS AS WELL AS THE ISRAELIS, PREDICTS THAT OUT OF ALL THE STRAIN AND FINESSE FOR ADVANTAGE, "NOTHING MUCH WILL HAPPEN."

23. IT IS ANOTHER OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN PARADOXES THAT CASSANDRA'S TIMING HAS ALMOST ALWAYS BEEN OFF. THE MOST TERRIBLE THINGS HAVE HAPPENED WHEN THEY WERE LEAST EXPECTED, AND LITTLE OF MOMENT HAS HAPPENED WHEN THERE HAS BEEN A CHORUS INTONING CATASTROPHE.

24. THE MATTER IS ONE OF SHORT-TERM OR LONG-TERM VIEW, BUT THE LONG-TERM AXIOM FOR THE MIDDLE EAST IS THAT THE ONE LONG-TERM CERTAINLY IS THAT THINGS WILL LOOK DIFFERENT SOME DAY.

25. IT IS NOT AT ALL SATISFYING TO THE MANY WHO YEARN FOR A SOLUTION AFTER SO MANY YEARS. AND IT IS DANGEROUSLY DISTURBING TO RESPONSIBLE PERSONS WHO UNDERSTAND THE RISKS OF LETTING CONFLICT SIMMER INDEFINITELY. BUT THERE IS NO REASON TO THINK THAT MR. BEGIN HAS A SECRET PLAN MORE COMPLEX THAN HIS OPEN INSISTENCE ON STANDING HIS GROUND, COME WHAT MAY, OR A SECRET DEFENSE MORE INSIDIOUS THAN HIS OPEN BELIEF THAT THE ARABS ARE NOT LIKELY TO MAKE A PEACE OFFER SO COMPELLING THAT HIS OWN
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WILLINGNESS TO SETTLE WILL BE PUT TO THE TEST. CHRISTOPHER

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